

U.S.-INDIA STRATEGIC RELATIONS: REALITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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Non-aligned status after independence deprived India of any meaningful cooperation with the Western countries, especially the United States. Consequent to its 1962 and 1965 wars with China and Pakistan respectively, India realized the importance of partnerships and looked towards the United States for assistance. However, not receiving any positive response, India signed a defense cooperation treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971. This treaty further alienated India and affected bilateral relations with the United States as India was considered the Soviet Union's protégé. Thereafter Indo-U.S. relations remained largely estranged with occasional cordiality, until President William Clinton assumed office in 1993. The treaty signed in June 2005 between India and the United States laid out a framework for future engagement. The growing economic power of India and its capacity to manage global commons, coupled with active participation in international organizations, has forced strategic and foreign policy planners in Washington, recognize the global aspirations of India. The resulting adjustments made by both countries in their foreign policies has ensured continued engagement and increased mutual trust. Perpetual irritants and an

occasional clash of national interests will have to be put aside for the ongoing strategic engagement to translate into a future permanent alliance.

U.S.-INDIA STRATEGIC RELATIONS: REALITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

India attained independence on 15 August 1947 and became a sovereign democratic republic. The freedom from colonial rule brought along with it a painful partition and permanent enmity between India and Pakistan. Within twenty five years of its existence, India fought four wars with her neighbors including a 1962 Chinese attack on India where it illegally occupied a large area in Aksai Chin (Jammu & Kashmir State of India).¹ This conflict happened when India was pursuing Indo-China friendship based on five principals of peaceful coexistence, referred as Panchsheel.² Notwithstanding the initial setbacks in international relations, India remained a significant member of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM), whereas after WW II, most of the countries either aligned with the United States or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, the only superpowers.³

Consequent to the war with China in 1962, India looked to the West to modernize its military but failed to receive any positive response probably due to its non-aligned status. India was left with no alternative than to forge ties with USSR in defense cooperation.⁴ On the other hand, Pakistan took the opportunity to become a member of Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), thereby aligning itself firmly with the United States.⁵ This alliance allowed Pakistan to receive substantial aid from the United States. The U.S. policy in South Asia remained centered around Pakistan throughout most of the cold war period, whereas Indian interests and aspirations were eclipsed in foreign policy corridors of the Washington as it was labeled a Soviet protégé.⁶ The occasional goodwill shown by successive U.S. Presidents until the Clinton administration's interaction in 1997 kept the hope of better relations with India alive. The Clinton administration tried to put U.S.-India relations on fast track but the process was

derailed consequent to the sanctions imposed on India after it conducted the nuclear test in 1998.⁷

Defining Indo-U.S. Relations

The Indo-U.S. relations can be divided into three distinct phases.⁸ The first phase lasted until the end of cold war. This was a period of estrangement and missed opportunities, largely due to mistrust. The second phase commenced during President William Clinton's visit to India in the year 2000. His successor, President George W. Bush further strengthened the relationship by signing a civil nuclear deal with India in 2008. This agreement reduced the trust deficit between the two nations and opened a new chapter in the Indo-U.S. strategic relationship. However, during initial days of President Barack Obama presidency it appeared that India did not figure in the U.S. global strategy.⁹ The third phase started with the visit of India's Prime Minister ManMohan Singh to United States in November 2009, the first state visit during Obama's administration.¹⁰ The growing Indo-U.S. relationship received another boost with the visit of President Obama to India in November 2010. If one believes in what President Obama said during his speech, then Indo-U.S. relations are bound to progress and strengthen in the years ahead. Obama acknowledged the rise of India on the world stage and stated, "India is not emerging; India has already emerged."¹¹ The President also remarked that Indo-U.S. relations would be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century. The United States' endorsement of permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council for India further indicates a shift in Indo-U.S. relations and U.S. foreign policy.¹² However, it is too early to conclude that the trust

deficit between two countries has been finally bridged.¹³ Nonetheless, a firm foundation for strategic relations has been laid but it will require careful nurturing in the future.

This paper analyzes and evaluates the realities and expectations of strategic relations including defense cooperation between India and the United States for global security and stability in 21st Century due to emergence of multi power centers especially China.

Dynamics of United States South Asia Foreign Policy

South Asia, which was considered inconsequential in the U.S. strategy a few years back, has finally emerged as an important area in 21st century and it is considered critical to the United States. India, the second most populous country in the region is acknowledged as a rising power and natural partner of the United States.¹⁴ The weight of a rising and comparatively wealthy Indian-American community of more than two million is reflected in the U.S. Congress' largest country-specific caucus.¹⁵ Moreover, since 2001, Indians have been the largest foreign student population on American college campuses, with nearly 95,000 students in 2008, comprising 15% of all foreign students in the United States.¹⁶ During the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, both leading candidates expressed support for a long- lasting and extended U.S.-India partnership including civil nuclear cooperation, as initiated by the Bush Administration.

Within days of assuming office President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee decided to strengthen further the bilateral relationship between the two countries.¹⁷ Subsequently, on India's Republic Day, 26 January, President Obama issued a statement of commemoration emphasizing, "*Our rapidly growing and deepening friendship with India offers benefits to*

all the world's citizens and that the people of India *should know they have no better friend and partner than the people of the United States* (emphasis added).¹⁸ Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton also addressed President Obama's commitment to *establish a true strategic partnership with India, increase military cooperation, trade, and support democracies around the world* (emphasis added). The initiation of a "Strategic Dialogue" process was announced by the Secretary of State Clinton during her visit to India in July 2009, as a means to further strengthen the relationship.¹⁹ However, divergent views exist amongst U.S. thinkers regarding relations with India. Some experts prefer continuing the current foreign policy objectives, whereas others believe that perpetual irritants such as nonproliferation, bilateral economic relations and divergent perceptions on a variety of contentious issues affect U.S. core interests and cannot keep the relationship strong and lasting.

Economic Surge and Global Governance

India's successive economic reforms since 1980 have steadily moved its economy towards a market-based system. The effect of this liberalization is visible in all aspects of its economic policies such as financial market regulations, trade and foreign investment, industrial and fiscal policies. The annual growth of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which was just over one percent in 1970s, has now increased to 8-9 percent.²⁰ The recession in the world market in last two to three years had little impact on India's economic growth. Sustained growth has catapulted the Indian economy to fourth place (based on Purchasing Power Parity) in the world, behind the United States and China. This economic growth has also resulted in reduction of poverty and

availability of finances for infrastructure development, energy production, research and development, social and education programs, and modernized armed forces.

The present global economic slowdown has given an opening to India to advance its place in the international order as a powerful and influential state. However, along with global status come additional responsibilities and commitments. It is also true that sustained improvement of relations between India and the United States are confined to building bilateral ties, where as multilateral issues have resulted in divergent views especially in World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations. Ensuring convergence of views between the two states on global governance with dissimilar foreign policy agendas and interests is the biggest challenge for both countries.²¹ India has always given high priority to the United Nations and international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the WTO, which assist India in both economic growth and assuming a larger global role.²²

For example, India always has a director on the boards of the World Bank, IMF, and ADB and its continuing presence on the boards has provided it an opening to shape the policies of all three institutions over a substantial period. India has also ensured availability of well-qualified people on the permanent staff of all three institutions for long-lasting influence. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, a distinguished Indian economist, contributed immensely to the IMF's Independent Evaluation Office, while serving as its director. India is not, however, a member of other important international forums such as International Energy Agency (IEA) or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in spite of being the world's second fastest growing energy

market, and fourth largest world economy . Nonetheless, India was invited in 2006 to participate in an “enhanced engagement” process to share its expertise in management of the global economy. Since then, India has been active in various OECD bodies and participated in a minister-level meeting in 2008. The United States is keen to see India as a member of IEA, considering its important global role.²³

India is also not a member of the Group of eight (G-8), but has been attending G-8 meetings every year since 2005.²⁴ The enlarged G-8 group established a two-year dialogue after 2007 meeting to discuss issues that affect the global economy. India has been an active participant in finding a solution to the global problems, providing leadership for two sub-groups, one on innovation (with France) and the other on energy efficiency (with Canada). India has also been contributing significantly to the Group of Twenty (G-20) to mitigate the global financial crisis.²⁵ Apart from working together in diverse economic forums, India and the United States are planning to work together in other institutions such as World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and in technical organizations such as the World Meteorological Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, the World Postal Union, and the World Intellectual Property Organization. India’s performance in formal and informal global organizations has been well appreciated by member countries, especially the United States. However, a dominating and primary role by India may threaten the primacy of European nations and the United States that head various formal organizations like the World Bank and IMF. On the economic front, the United States and India have combined to address the global economic crisis, which is encouraging.

India has also played an active role since inception of the United Nations, ranging from drafting its human rights declaration to participation in negotiations concerning the Antarctic Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty and the UN convention on the Laws of the Sea.²⁶ India's long-term goal of obtaining a permanent Security Council seat is not only justified but attaining this objective will ensure balanced representation of the various World regions. India was last a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1992. However, during the UN General Assembly session in October 2010, India was elected to the Security Council as a non-permanent member with a record number of votes (189 countries voted in favor of India out of 192). This outcome is an indication of the changed 21st century strategic environment.

India's Quest for Permanent UNSC Member: Justification and Complexities

Research and analysis by the U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC) and the European Union's Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) has projected that the United States share of global power will decline from 22 to 18 percent by 2025, while China will rise from 12 to 16 percent, displacing the European Union (down to 14 percent from 16 percent).²⁷ These developments will make United States and China a close first and second in power; India will remain third with 10 percent power, if the EU is not counted as a block. Therefore, it may be inappropriate for the United Kingdom, France and Russia, each with less global power, to continue to be permanent UNSC members with veto power, while India, the third most powerful country, has to struggle for a permanent seat.²⁸ The United States, which stands for democratic values as a state policy, cannot ignore a stable and responsible, as well as the largest democratic country, like India to assume a larger share of global governance responsibility.

In order to face the challenges, posed by complex and ambiguous environment of 21st century, the UN Security Council needs to be transparent and have balanced regional representation.²⁹ The United States, which was reluctant to support India for a permanent seat in Security Council until recently, has accepted the changing realities and it endorsed India's presence as a permanent member of a reformed Security Council. This announcement by President Barack Obama during his visit to India in November 2010 has given a boost to U.S.-India strategic relations. On the other hand, from the U.S. perspective, the voting records of a large number of UN member states, including India, project a different story.³⁰ It voted with the United States only 14.7 percent of the time in 2007, compared with 18 percent for all other countries. India and the United States voted together only for 52 percent of the time, if consensus votes are counted, and zero otherwise on issues important to the United States. In the General Assembly and its UN committees, India prefers to be diplomatically neutral when its own and Non Aligned Movement (NAM) member's interests clash. During such situations, Indian diplomats try to work out a solution, which does not hurt NAM friends and the countries that have strained relations with the United States such as Cuba, Iran, Myanmar and Sudan. India considers voting in the General Assembly as a way of displaying solidarity with NAM member states. However, a divergence of views in the General Assembly does not impact mutual relations. India and the United States put more emphasis on their convergence of views concerning peacekeeping operations, for which Security Council is the proper deliberative body.³¹ India and the United States both believe that peacekeeping operations to maintain order under a UN mandate are essential. India is one of the three major contributors of personnel for peacekeeping

along with Bangladesh and Pakistan. India considers its peacekeeping responsibility as a chance to uplift its status and highlight its capabilities for global governance.

Additionally, a decade ago it was viewed that the United States is the only power to command the global commons (sea, air space, and cyber space).³² Although India may feel that it is ready to undertake the responsibility to govern these commons jointly, the question is whether U.S. policymakers are in agreement with Indian thinking or not. U.S. strategists, Michele Flournoy and Shawn Brimbley argue that, “ *the rising powers will not simply be content to agree to America’s role as uncontested guarantor of the global commons. Countries such as China, Russia, and India will demand a role in maintaining the international system in ways that commensurate with their perceived power and national interests*”(emphasis added).³³ Some Americans are skeptical of engaging India in managing the global commons. Indians have been expressing divergent views on its global role as well, including being part of Group of Seventy Seven, BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China), and the “Strategic Triangle” (India, Russia, China). Notwithstanding the divergent views in both countries, the United States and India are natural allies as has been expressed by the political leaders and experts of the respective nations at various forums.

Indian Foreign Policy and Geo-Strategic Interests

Indian foreign policy in 1970s was guided by over emphasis on sovereignty, equality and the Non Aligned Movement. However, India’s emergence as global power has compelled the foreign policy experts to move away from traditional thinking and adjust to a changed global environment. The shift has been slow but India appears to be adjusting well as a new global player. The intrinsic divergence in adapting to new

challenges is visible in three ways, as argued by Mohan C. Raja, strategic affairs editor of *The Indian Express* in New Delhi:³⁴

- (a) Autonomy versus Responsibility. In 2009, during the Copenhagen summit, India could not fully discard G-77 agenda and hence did not align with the West adequately. However, India emerged as an important player in Copenhagen while working with China, Brazil, and South Africa in climate change negotiations.
- (b) Universal Multilateralism to Selective Coalition. India has slowly shifted from NAM and G-77 to integration with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and task-oriented smaller groups such as IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa), BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) and triangular strategic forum with Russia and China. This arrangement augurs well with rising aspirations of India as a global power.
- (c) Order versus Equity. India's vote against Iran on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the pretext of security and stability concerns is a departure from its earlier foreign policy of impartiality and morality.

Additionally, India is moving in a direction that will assist it in organizing for the management of the global commons. The maritime strategic cooperation between India and the United States that started in 1980s and moved on a fast track in 1990s is a successful experiment. Regular naval exercises between both countries, assistance provided by the Indian Navy during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2002, and coordinated relief operations in Indian Ocean in 2004, have given an opportunity to India and the United States to understand each other more intimately. Indian Navy's well-honed maritime strategy with its planned expansion is consistent with

India's aspirations for an increased role in the control of the Indian Ocean, which has impressed U.S. Strategists. India finds itself well engrained in sharing with the United States responsibility for managing the maritime commons. On the other hand, China's aspirations in Pacific and Indian Oceans, and growing cooperation between the United States and India, may force China to take measures that will ensure its interests in the Pacific and Indian Oceans are not jeopardized.³⁵ The success achieved by India in maritime cooperation is likely to encourage the United States to extend similar cooperation in air, space, and cyberspace dimensions of the global commons.

Defense Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities

The war in Afghanistan, suppression of the democratic movement in Myanmar, terrorist activities in northwest Pakistan, increased piracy in the Indian Ocean, and the rising global aspirations of China have made the security environment in South Asia complex and volatile. The most worrisome trends for India are China's rapid military modernization and its growing interest in the Pacific & Indian Oceans. Rapid economic growth and increased energy requirements in 21st Century will likely to compel China to project its power more aggressively in Indian and Pacific Oceans to ensure uninterrupted trade.³⁶ Before analyzing the requirement for sustained and future oriented U.S.-India defense cooperation, it is important to understand India's concerns in the changed environment of 21st century in South Asia.

China has carefully nurtured Pakistan over a sustained period and transferred nuclear weapons and missile technology to it, which has kept Indian security planners and resources preoccupied.³⁷ This preoccupation has helped China to pursue its strategic goals without any hindrance. China's Defense white paper of December 2006

lays down its military aims and modernization strategy.³⁸ It is a three steps process: lay down firm foundation by 2010, make major progress by 2020, and reach the strategic goal of building “informationized” armed forces by the mid 21st century. Gurmeet Kanwal, a prolific writer on strategic issues, argues that China’s focused and fast-paced modernization drive is increasing the military power gap between India and China with each passing year.³⁹ Construction of the all weather Gormo – Lhasa railway line and an improved road network with adequate laterals will assist the Chinese military to mobilize faster and possibly defeat Indian defense plans. China also has a stockpile of missiles that have major Russian and Indian cities in range. Its Indian specific missile Dong Feng 21 has a range of 2500 kilometers. Dong Feng 31 and Dong Feng 41 missiles have a range of 8000-10000 kilometers. With launch facilities in Tibet being reorganized and the rapid militarization of Tibet, the growing worry of Indian strategic thinkers is logical and understandable. Moreover, China’s defense expenditures have been increasing at approximately 12-15 percent annually for the last ten years. In 2008-09, China’s defense expenditures were \$58.79 billion, as compared to India’s defense budget of \$26.4 billion. China’s successful anti-satellite test conducted in January 2007, the acquisition of SU-30 fighter-bombers, an air-to-air refueling capability, and its interest in acquiring re-entry vehicle technology are indications of its aspiration to challenge other global players in 21st century.

In 2009, a poll was conducted on the internet after a report published by the *Global Times* newspaper indicated that India was dispatching 60,000 troops to border with China. Ninety percent of the Chinese believed that India is a threat to China, Seventy-four percent believed that China should not have friendly relations with India,

and sixty-five percent felt that India's actions were harmful to bilateral ties between the two countries. The poll is a strong indicator, of the image of India, in the minds of Chinese population. It also indicates the level of fear that is created in the minds of people whenever a military maneuver is undertaken close to the border by either side. One aspect is clear: general animosity exists between the two countries and it is enough to escalate tensions along the border if military activities are not finely calibrated.⁴⁰

Another area where China is making inroads is maritime dominance in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This step poses a severe challenge to both India and the United States. After centuries of dominance by Western Maritime powers, China now aspires to move beyond its territorial waters through well-honed maritime strategy based on the so-called "String of Pearls" approach.⁴¹ Under this concept, Hainan Island with its military facility, the air strip at Woody Island(located east of Vietnam), the container shipping facilities at Chittagong (Bangladesh), a deep water port at Sittwe (Myanmar), and the construction of navy base at Gwadar (Pakistan) are "pearls" that connect mainland China to the Persian Gulf through the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca, across the Indian Ocean, and into the Arabian Sea. At present, there is no evidence of China's expansionism; however, the strategy is an indication of China's aim to project power along sea lines of communication (SLOC). From an Indian perspective, construction of the Gwadar port enhances Pakistan's strategic depth along the coast line. Gwadar is just 240 miles from the Strait of Hormuz and hence of strategic value to China. China is also building a railway line from south China to the Gulf of Thailand.

Strategic management of the “string of pearls” will fulfill China’s twin objectives of power projection and control of the SLOC.

Two major issues where the United States and China have divergent views are Taiwan and Korean Peninsula. China is applying its economic influence to isolate Taiwan and reduce U.S. influence in the region. Possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea with the active support of China has created instability in the region, which is worrisome to the United States as South Korea, its ally, is directly threatened by this development. The recent exchange of artillery fire in November 2010 between the two Koreas suggests a growing Chinese influence in the region. India also continues to have differences on three major issues with China that keeps relations between the two countries stressful: border dispute along Tibet remains unresolved leading to occasional tension; issuance of a stapled visa instead of regular visa to the people of Jammu and Kashmir by China; and defense cooperation with Pakistan, especially assistance in establishing nuclear facilities and missile programme. Hence, in spite of economic cooperation with China and the exchange of visits by political leaders, India cannot afford to lower its guard, lest the 1962 debacle is repeated.

The economic power of China and its rapid military modernization along with its growing influence in the world may not result in a military confrontation with the United States or India in the near future, but it is likely to challenge U.S. supremacy in Pacific and Indian Oceans and reduce U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific region.⁴² In order to counter-balance China’s potential hegemony in the region, the United States has an option to fortify its strategic relationship with India, a democratic nation that shares Washington’s concerns and possesses the required capacity to provide security and

stability as a trusted partner.⁴³ On the other hand, India needs to modernize its military at a faster pace to defeat China's possible aggressive designs. In the present environment, defense cooperation with the United States appears to be a reasonable option for India considering the common concerns and growing trust.

Initiation of Indo-U.S. Defense Cooperation

India signed its first bilateral treaty of "Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation" with USSR before the breakout of hostilities with Pakistan in 1971, as it required defense equipment and weapon system to modernize its military.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the United States supported Pakistan during the 1971 war, which was evident when the aircraft carrier, the USS Enterprise was positioned in the Bay of Bengal.⁴⁵ However, after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, India looked towards other countries as alternative suppliers of defense equipment.⁴⁶ Apart from the United States, India started purchasing equipment from United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and Israel. The first step towards Indo-U.S. defense cooperation was an agreement signed by the U.S. Army Pacific commander, Lieutenant General Claude Kicklighter, in 1991 to expand army-to-army contact.⁴⁷ It was followed by another agreement signed by Secretary of Defense William Perry and Indian Minister of State for Defense M. Mallikarjun in 1995, which further increased the contact between the military of both countries.⁴⁸ Another agreement signed in June 2005 laid down the "New Framework for the Indo-U.S. Defense Relationship."⁴⁹ In this agreement, both countries agreed to work jointly in ten different fields of mutual interest. Seven different working groups have been constituted as part of the institutionalized mechanism for dialogue to steer the strategic relations towards the intended goal under the new framework. The 2005 agreement was further

strengthened by Indo-U.S. joint declaration issued by Prime Minister ManMohan Singh and President George W. Bush in March 2006. In essence, defense cooperation between the two countries has been on the increase since 1991 except for a brief halt, consequent to a nuclear test conducted by India in 1998. Sanctions imposed in 1998 were partially lifted by President Clinton in January 2001 that provided the opportunity, for finalizing equipment sales, which had been put on hold due to the sanctions.⁵⁰ The purchase of Q-37 Firefinder radars was the first major purchase from United States in almost four decades. This was followed by purchase of C-130J aircrafts, P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, and SH-3 Sea King helicopters. During President Obama's visit in November 2010, equipment deals worth billions of dollars were signed, which signified the higher level of confidence and the enhanced strategic relations between the two nations. The deals include \$44.1 billion agreement for the purchase of 10 C-17 transport planes from Boeing and purchase of 107 F414 engines for the Tejas light combat aircraft from General Electric worth \$822 million.⁵¹ The United States is also a contender for selling medium multirole combat aircraft, attack helicopters, and heavy lift helicopters to India.

Lastly, since the signing of the 2005 agreement, the upward trend both in arms trade and military-to-military contact between India and the United States is clearly visible.⁵² There has been a significant increase in military exercises between the two countries as well.⁵³ The exercises are conducted both in both the United States and India. Both countries have participated in more than 50 bilateral/multilateral exercises since 2001. The conduct of joint exercises has given the military of both countries opportunities to understand each other at the functional level and grasp the essentials

of tactical/operational level planning, which is necessary for joint operations. The defense cooperation between India and the United States has improved steadily in the past five years and appears to be moving in the right direction.

The Way Ahead

The last few years have witnessed a steep increase in Indo-U.S. strategic understanding. Both countries appear to be learning the dynamics of adjustments and accommodation. The historic trip of the President Obama to India in November 2010 was planned at an appropriate moment and it signaled that strategic thinker and foreign policy planners in Washington believe India holds a vital position in foreign policy framework of the United States.⁵⁴ Additionally, three important areas where the United States decided to cooperate with India are defense, civil space and other high technology sectors.⁵⁵ The United States removed the Indian space and defense entities from the U.S. entity list thereby enabling India to import technology for these crucial sectors. It also assured India, its assistance in obtaining full membership in four multilateral export control regimes (the nuclear supplier group, the missile technology control regime, the Australian group, and Wassenaar Agreement).⁵⁶ However, India will need to fulfill these regime's core requirements before any decision is taken to induct India into the proposed regimes. It is a slow and deliberate process. In addition to the concessions and support extended to India, fifty deals worth \$10 billion were signed between the two countries thereby creating around 50,000 jobs in the United States. With recession still looming large over America, economic deals with India are likely to benefit the United States in boosting its domestic market and stabilizing its economy. The Obama's visit has also successfully mitigated some of the India's apprehensions

regarding slow progress on bilateral ties. It is interesting to note that within a period of five years since the signing of the 2005 treaty, the strategic engagement between the two countries has not only leapfrogged but it is also being viewed as a defining partnership of 21st century. Indo-U.S. cooperation on global security and terrorism, clean energy and climate change, economic trade and agriculture, education and development, health, food security and military engagement has increased confidence between the two countries and given India an opportunity to show its prowess in managing global issues with commitment and transparency.⁵⁷

However, a nonpartisan working group consisting of Richard L. Armitage, R. Nicholas Burns and Richard Fontaine, holds the view that the relationship between India and the United States should be rooted in shared values and interests and not transactional or occasional collaborations.⁵⁸ The India's rise as a global power is in United States interest and hence it should assist India to emerge as a strong and well-established power center with a capacity to maintain security and stability in South Asia. Some of the U.S. interests in fostering strategic relationship with India include a stable Asia and a global balance of power, strengthening an open global trading system, protecting and preserving access to global commons, bolstering international nonproliferation regime, and allowing access to secure global energy resources. The future of Indo-U.S. relations appears to be positive considering the present trends and the momentum demonstrated in the last few years with the active involvement of political leaders of both countries. However, the strength of this relationship will depend on how well both countries can manage persistent irritants as explained in the following

section. Another factor is the likely reaction of China towards the growing closeness between India and the United States.

The major irritants from Indian perspective are the huge aid given to Pakistan by the United States to fight terror, the involvement of Pakistan in engineering terrorist attacks in India, Pakistan's role in limiting India's involvement in Afghanistan, and differences of opinion on economic issues such as global warming, outsourcing and an increase in H1B1 visa fee.⁵⁹ From 1950 onwards, Pakistan has received aid from the United States regularly. Pakistan has played the trusted ally card with the United States very effectively; first as an indispensable partner in fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan in 1980s and then as a key player in anti-terrorist operations after the 2001 attacks on World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Since 2001, Pakistan has received almost \$18 billion in aid, which includes \$11.5 billion in military assistance.⁶⁰ Additional military assistance of \$1.6 billion and \$1.4 billion of civilian assistance have also been proposed by the Obama Administration. Pakistan is likely to receive \$7.5 billion in non-military assistance under the Kerry-Lugar-Berman act, beginning in 2009. India feels the U.S. aid is being misused, principally to create trouble in its territory.⁶¹ The U.S. intelligence community's interrogation of David Headley, an American citizen, revealed the active involvement of Pakistan in supporting terrorist attacks in India especially the 2008 Mumbai attacks.⁶² No action has been taken by the Pakistan Government against the perpetrators of attacks to this point.⁶³ Instead, the terrorists are moving freely in that country.

India is also actively involved in construction activities in Afghanistan as it has historical ties with that country. However, Pakistan wants to control Afghanistan through

proxy⁶⁴, like it did by supporting the Taliban regime earlier and it views India's presence in Afghanistan with suspicion.⁶⁵ U.S. General Stanley McChrystal, the former U.S. Commander in Afghanistan, warned, "Increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tension and encourage Pakistani counter measures."⁶⁶ A statement like this by a U.S. military leader has far-reaching political consequences and such comments should be discouraged. Conversely, India as the dominant nation in South Asia and a natural partner of the United States should be the automatic choice for an active role in attaining a solution of Afghanistan problem.⁶⁷ Other economic irritants, although contentious are being handled maturely, keeping in mind the national interests and objectives of both countries.

As mentioned previously, another factor that will influence Indo-U.S. relationship is the likely counter measures that China may adopt.⁶⁸ China's reactions are visible in a Chinese language article published in *Qui Shi* in September 2009, titled, "The strengthening of U.S.-India military cooperation will change the strategic situation in South Asia."⁶⁹ Li Qiulin, a Chinese analyst and author of the article, argues that both countries are likely to pursue long- term cooperation at military and political levels and the United States will become a key supplier of military equipment to India. China is also aware of the joint Indo-U.S. exercises being conducted and the adoption of NATO operational procedures during maneuvers. The article further mentions that through this partnership, India wants to maintain its hegemony over the Indian Ocean and South Asia, and the United States wants to utilize Indian ports, military training facilities and bases for its activities in the Middle East and other regions. The views espoused in the article indicate Chinese concerns of China regarding Indo-U.S. strategic relations.

Although it is less likely, the improved relationship between India and the United States may compel China to foster better relations with both India and the United States and resolve all pending issues. If this outcome manifest into a reality, then it will be a positive step for regional stability and peace. Otherwise, it is likely to create fear and an arms race, thereby affecting global peace.

Although a solid foundation has been laid for Indo-U.S. relations, it will require careful handling before it transforms into a permanent alliance based on shared values and mutual interests. In order to be an equal and effective partner India will have to improve its infrastructure, remove poverty, restructure education system, eliminate corruption, and bring accountability in the system.⁷⁰ The United States is well placed to assist India in implementing the above programs.

Conclusion

The Pentagon's 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), explains the changed strategic environment of the 21st century, the growing power of India, and India's influence in global affairs.⁷¹ From strategic point of view, the confidence shown in India by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) is probably the outcome of mutual trust and understanding established through defense cooperation, especially joint exercises and frequent interactions between the defense officials of both countries. Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff during his visit to India described military-to-military cooperation between the two countries as stunning.⁷² However, he also expressed recently his desire to improve further military cooperation with China.⁷³ It will have to be seen whether this cooperation is in consonance with the strategic interests of India or meets only U.S. interests.

Additionally India's strategic location in the Indian Ocean, its growing influence in the region and its naval capacity to secure sea-lanes of communication (SLOC) in the Indian Ocean should encourage the United States to assist India in maintaining security and stability in South Asia.⁷⁴ However, this will need further boost to civil nuclear cooperation, civil space cooperation and transfer of high-end technology.⁷⁵ If a democratic country such as India can successfully project itself as a global power, it may encourage non-democratic countries and countries with a fragile democracy in Asia to embrace democracy more favorably.⁷⁶ If the United States has to make a choice between India and China, for a strategic partner in Asian region, then India appears to have an edge being a proven democracy and convergence of the two nations' strategic interests.⁷⁷

The United States and India have moved from the period of estrangement to engagement and sustainment in their relations in the past six decades. The present phase can be categorized as a "golden period" in strategic relations between the two countries. The trend in improved relations is also due to the sustained efforts of an influential Indian-American community, which has been able to change the perception of India in the U.S. Congress.⁷⁸ In addition, India's active involvement in global institutions, various international forums and its demonstrated capacity to manage global commons has attracted the attention of global community. The Indo-US relationship is a renewed one and it will require policy changes by both India and United States. Nevertheless, strong strategic relations will bring peace and stability in Asia and will give India and the United States an opportunity to spread democracy, to work together on global issues such as climate change, counter- terrorism, and economic recovery, and to make the

United Nation an effective international organization with a balanced composition.

Perpetual irritants as discussed above will have to be minimized for the relationship to prosper. In the end, Indian strategic thinkers are likely to watch carefully how the United States realigns its Pakistan-centric foreign policy to accommodate India's vital interests in South Asia.

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